NCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5799 MAY 8, 1978
LARRY LESUEUR

ON LOBBYING

ANNCR:

IT IS OFTEN SAID IN WASHINGTON THAT LOBBYISTS ARE EVERYWHERE IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL. BUT WHO ARE THEY...AND WHAT TO THEY DO? VOA'S LARRY LESUEUR HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

VOICE:

PRESIDENT CARTER HAS PUBLICALLY SINGLED OUT THE ACTIVITIES OF LOBBYISTS FOR OIL INTERESTS AS PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE YEAR-LONG CONGRESSIONAL DELAY IN APPROVING HIS ENERGY BILL. HOWEVER, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR THE AVERAGE AMERICAN TO RECOGNIZE A LOBBYIST IF HE SAW ONE. THEY ARE OLD AND YOUNG, AND PREDOMINANTLY MALE, THOUGH MANY ARE WOMEN.

THE NAME LOBBYIST STEMS FROM THE ENTRANCE HALLS OR VESTIBULES OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS WHICH SERVE AS PLACES TO WAIT IN ORDER TO TRY TO INFLUENCE A LEGISLATOR TO VOTE FOR OR AGAINST A BILL. THE WORD LOBBYIST THUS CAME TO REFER TO ANYONE IN WASHINGTON TAKING PART IN A DIRECT EFFORT TO INFLUENCE THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS. THIS IS KNOWN AS DIRECT LOBBYING. THERE IS ALSO WHAT IS CALLED "GRASS-ROOTS" OR INDIRECT LOBBYING, WHEREBY INDIVIDUALS ARE URGED TO WRITE THEIR CONGRESSMEN TO VOTE FOR OR AGAINST A SPECIFIC BILL.

IT'S SAID THAT THERE ARE REALLY ONLY THREE INDUSTRIES IN WASHINGTON -- GOVERNMENT, CONSTRUCTION, AND TRADE ASSOCIATIONS. THERE ARE LITERALLY THOUSANDS OF TRADE AND SPECIAL INTEREST ASSOCIATIONS HEADQUARTERED IN WASHINGTON. THEY REPRESENT A RANGE OF INTERESTS FROM INDIAN TRIBES TO GIANT INTERNATIONAL OIL COMPANIES. THEY TRY TO KEEP THEIR MEMBERS INFORMED ABOUT EVENTS TAKING PLACE IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL WHICH COULD AFFECT THEIR

SPECIAL INTERESTS. ESSENTIALLY, THEY ARE ADVOCATES FOR THEIR CLIENTS. AND, WHILE LOBBYISTS ARE RARELY PRAISED, THEY DO SERVE A USEFUL PURPOSE, BECAUSE THEY ARE EXPERTS IN THEIR FIELDS.

SINCE MOST MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH ARE EXPECTED TO BE GENERALISTS WHO CAN DEAL WITH ANY ISSUE, THERE IS CLEARLY A NEED FOR EXPERT INFORMATION ON COMPLEX ISSUES. LOBBYISTS CAN BE COUNTED UPON TO GIVE PRECISE INFORMATION TO LEGISLATORS OR THEIR AIDES ON A SPECIFIC SUBJECT.

NEW YORK CITY, WHICH HAS SUFFERED ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, MAINTAINS A NUMBER OF OFFICES IN WASHINGTON TO CONDUCT BUSINESS WITH VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. CURRENTLY, THE NEW YORK LOBBYISTS ARE WORKING FOR A SUBSTANTIAL FEDERAL LOAN PROGRAM TO AID NEW YORK CITY. OTHER JURISDICTIONS ALSO MAINTAIN OFFICES IN WASHINGTON TO ADVISE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ON THEIR ENERGY, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND OTHER PROBLEMS. FORMER MEMBERS OF CONGRESS OFTEN BECOME LOBBYISTS BECAUSE OF THEIR WIDE ACQUAINTANCE AMONG INCUMBENT LEGISLATORS. LOBBYISTS GENERALLY ARE LIKEABLE AND RESPECTED. IT IS WHEN THEY BECOME OVER-ZEALOUS ON BEHALF OF THEIR CLIENTS THAT THEY BECOME THE TARGET OF CRITICISM SUCH AS PRESIDENT CARTER'S NATIONALLY TELEVISED REMARKS BLAMING OIL LOBBYISTS FOR HELPING DELAY CONGRESSIONAL PASSAGE OF HIS ENERGY BILL.

JS/RCS